

Washington, DC - 12th District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah) issued the following statement in response to President Bush's State of the Union address, delivered earlier this evening:

"A year ago, the President said that 'America is addicted to oil.' Tonight, he outlined an ambitious plan to help kick that addiction by raising fuel economy standards and boosting domestic renewable fuel production to almost 35 billion barrels a year by 2017. This plan can be achieved, and it would have a lasting and positive impact, provided we're willing to put words into action.

"Energy is an issue that Congress cannot afford to ignore in the year ahead. And the road to energy independence runs through public-private partnerships with American industry, better funding for our research universities, and increased consumer demand.

"When it comes to making health insurance more affordable, the President is on target when he says 'a future of hope and opportunity requires that all our citizens have affordable and available health care.' Unfortunately, the plan he outlined tonight misses the mark.

"At a time when some 46 million Americans have no health insurance, the President is proposing a tax increase on people who get health insurance from their employers. The money raised would then pay for a tax break to buy health insurance. The problem is that even with the President's proposed tax break, those who can't afford health insurance now still won't be able to afford insurance coverage.

"Raising taxes on those who have health insurance is not the way to make it more affordable for everyone else. We should change the tax code to make insurance more affordable for those who don't have any insurance, not make it more expensive for those who already have insurance."

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Contact: Harper Lawson, (202) 225-2823

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